Mir Ghulam Rasool Nazki
The Timeless Visionary

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میٚیہ پَتہٕ تنقید گژِھ میأنِس کلامَس

دَپَن یِہ چھُ کأشِر یُک روٗمی تہٕ رأزی

سِیہَ کارَس دَپَن دِل چھُس پُرٕ اَنوار

سخن سأزی چھِ بُڈٕہِش جعلسأزی

My verse will be assessed when I am gone,
and placed at part with Runi and Razi's art
the wicked me will be eulogized a saint,
poetry in effect is a deceptive craft

Prologue
Pages from past

To begin with something personal may seem odd but I must confess at outset that I am a nostalgic person, with nothing but a handful of memories to propel the boat of my life ahead. Particularly when it comes to writing something about Mir Ghulam Rasool Nazki and his poetry, I can't resist but recall the memories that have finally assumed the shape of these pages. It was 2007, when as a student of class 9th I for the first time encountered the poetry of G.R.Nazki as a part of my Urdu curriculum. Fortunately I had a deep passion for poetry and would appreciate anything pertaining to it. God had been too gracious that I was already in contact with Mr. Rouf Rahat, who is a living manifestation of Urdu. The quantum of indebtedness I feel towards him is beyond words. Had I not benefitted from his company I might have given up Urdu long back and the sense of appreciation and interest I show towards poetry, would have exhausted with time. Well exploring any poet in his presence was a treat in itself and G.R.Nazki was not an exception to it. Besides Nazki I was equally influenced by Rasa Javedani, Shabeeb Rizvi and others included in our curriculum. I must confess that my horizon was too narrow then and I besides two odes of each poet as were incorporated in our book, I had read nothing else. But I was always in search of some supplementary stuff to enhance my understanding and approach towards poetry. This endeavor got dim as soon as I got admitted to intermediate with science subjects, something poles apart from poetry. In 2011 I made it to the National Institute of technology, something which was by then regarded as a monumental task and got engaged with engineering. Same year, I guess in the month of August Saleem Salik sahib , an affectionate guide invited me to some event jointly held by Cultural academy and NCPUL. To be frank enough the event turned to be nothing more than stultifying for me as it was remotely linked to my interests. A blessing in disguise happened for me, when before conclusion we had the opportunity of listening to Ayaz Rasool Nazki, the name that I confused with G.R, Nazki for years. I found him so responsive, appreciative and encouraging whose similitude I couldn't find. Talking to him on the sidelines of the conference a new spark got lit in my subconscious and I started taking poetry (reading) seriously again. Lately I got to know more about G.R.Nazki from him and this inspired me to undertake his systematic study. I was already into Iqbaliyat and while exploring Nazki, it became evident that he is surely the Kashmiri version of Iqbalian thought, if not Iqbal of Kashmir (Keeping in view what Dr. Maroof Shah has genuinely pointed to). But my heart was disturbed by the fact that he was not known, understood and appreciated by the youth. In same time I used to narrate his couplets to my friends, who would then keep shaking their heads in appreciation. This fortified my belief that Nazki if introduced to newer generation can inspire and illuminate our ways. Fortunately a selection of his Quatrains as translated by Ayaz Rasool Nazki in English make him accessible to youth who are otherwise at loggerheads with Kashmiri and Persian, the vehicle of his message.

This handout shall be taken as an initiative in this direction, the mission of spreading his universal message among upcoming generations. It is expected that his simpl approach will liberate us of many complicacies and provide an alternative and sustainable solution to ever emerging problems. It is hoped that these pages will serve the purpose of setting the engine into ignition so that it may surmount the impossible.

تو مرا آموختی رمز حیات
جسم و جانم دین و ایمانم توئی

With all love and regards these pages are dedicated to Rukaya Faiz to whome I owe a lot and to whome I say:-

اگر سیاه دلم داغ لاله زار توام
وگر گشاده جبینم گل بہار توام

Body of paper:-

"Poetry as Nazki sees is a gift as well as craftsmanship; it is felicity of expression, and it ought not to be purposeless. Nazki's own poetry is an apt illustration of this definition of poetry. Masterly ease and felicity of expression is its hallmark but it always brings lots of wisdom in its lap", remarks professor G R MALIK. Poetry on the whole is an assembly of rambling emotions shrouded in garb of language. It is a universal maxim that poetry is the language of emotions. Thus there exists an intimate nexus between poetic consciousness and emotional activism. These emotions manifest in varied forms in different poets, but there manifestation is universal. This is what is expressed in this verse:-

حق اگر سوزے ندارد حکمت است
شعر می گردد چو سوز از دل گرفت

But it remains largely the obligation of poets to rise above emotions and to speak on bitter realities of life, something we now term as purposive poetry. Mir Ghulam Rasool Nazki is a poet both in the context of structuralism as well as in purposive domain. His poetry opens a new vista of possibilities besides offering

panacea to existing conundrums. In following pages we shall explore the utility of his poetry and demarcate the place he occupies in context of modern social trends. Some of the miscellaneous aspects of his poetry shall also be envisaged hereupon.

Despite his experiment with diverse range of poetic forms GR Nazki remains an impeccable quatrarian. His quatrains are a blend of simplicity, wisdom, rhythm and poetic flavor. To find his parallels we need to turn to Khayyam, Iqbal and others of this class. He seems to be incomparable to his contemporaries in this genre of poetry. As Ghulam Nabi Khayaal notes " those of our poets who have tried to write quatrains in established meter of 'La hawlawa la quwataillabillah'have failed desperately". Some of our poets may have done successful experiments as far as quatrain as art is concerned but their writings fall too short of content and impact when compared to that of Nazki. As an illustration we note the following Quatrains from his writings. Nazki says:-

مَرُن چھنہٕ موت۔ اَدِ؟ تُو زِندگانی
سیٚٹھاہ بڑر زِندٕگانی، جاودانی
بُڈِس وسواس کیٚو ہے بے مَرُن چھُم
بُڈِس چھُ جل مَرُن، بُتھہٕ چھس جوانی

Translation:

Death is no end but a life ever new
eternal happiness, morning dew,
old man ! why are you scared ?
lasting youth is ahead of you.

He speaks on the value of life and says:-

خُدایَن چھےٚ ژےٚ استعداد دیُت مُت
مہ گر بُرباد شِہَہ، فاٴتر گَژھَن مَژ
غنیمت زان یِم دوہ زین کینٛہہ ہاہ
پٔژن تقدیٖر تھو پننِ اَتھَن مَژ

Translation:

God has bestowed you with life
do not waste it in idle talk,
use your time in gainful trade;
tame your destiny, change your lot

He speaks on countless issues via his quatrains. These issues span over social, religious, ethical, philosophical, metaphysical and most importantly everyday domains. The flow of language coupled with depth of message surely makes him the master of quatrains. Some of the concurrent social issues are placed so nicely and addressed with such ingenuity that it only remains a matter of misfortune that we aren't able to implement his ideology to counter our challenging social landscape. Another important aspect of his poetry as Maroof Shah notes "he doesn't know aestheticism or poetry for poetry's sake".

Nazki assimilated the influence of his predecessors in poetry among whom Iqbal seems most influential, not to speak of Gani Kashmiri, Khayyam and Emerson among many others. He was a perfect blend of oriental and occidental traditions. Rooted in traditions he had an eagle's eye on contemporary literary trends both in East as well as west. Tracing Iqbal's influence on Nazki Professor Abdul Qadir Sarwari writes "Like Iqbal, Nazki speaks of freedom, humanism, compassion and equality". Nazki imitates Iqbal not only in thought but in art as well. Many of his verses are a direct translation of Allama. Despite imitation he doesn't sacrifice his individuality and own shade. Even while importing Iqbal to Kashmiri he maintains his uniqueness. To draw parallels between the two suffice to observe the given below comparison. Iqbal while addressing God asserts :-

تُو شب آفریدی چراغ آفریدم
سفال آفریدی ایاغ آفریدم
بیابان و کہسار و راغ آفریدی
خیابان و گلزار و باغ آفریدم

Which Nazki imports into Kashmiri as:-

شبک گٹہٕ کار دِیُت تھم زۆل کۆرمس
لۄہم بے کار گٹراہ پیٲلہٕ گۆرمس
کرٕم چاٲنس زمینس مالہٕ پوشن
ستن طرفن وتن الماس جۆرمس

Countless congruencies like this exist between the two both at ideological and expressional plane. The study of these similarities opens new horizons and possibilities particularly in context of contemporary times. This can be an engaging topic for many a research scholars to trace the similarities between the two on different issues. These similarities can be found in their Urdu as well as Persian writings.

Nazki like Dante, Goethe, Iqbal and Rumi is a futuristic poet. As a matter of fact poet is the mirror of his times, but sometimes poets rise above space-time fabric to foresee the events which are otherwise hidden from others. As Rumi said:-

مشو منکر کہ در اشعار اے قوم
ورائے شاعری چیزے دگر است

It must be borne in mind that poetry is not palmistry of nations, but predicts the destiny of societies and nations based on their present status. It is a social analysis and the theory of social evolution at most. It may be thought as analogous to the "Theory of probability" in mathematics whereby things aren't predicted but calculated. At one place Nazki inferred that:-

کون کہتا ہے شب غم کی سحر ہونے لگی
امن و آشتی کی صورت جلوہ گر ہونے لگی
جب سے پھینکی ہے نظر اس نے ستاروں پہ کمند
زندگی دشوار تھی دشوار تر ہونے لگی

This inference has indeed turned out to be correct. In the present era of space conquest when man has conquered the limitless skies man has simultaneously failed to conquer his own self. In the process of gaining control over forces of nature he has lost self-control and turned into something that Albert Camus terms as "a wild beast loosed upon this world". Nazki foretells futuristic events in his typical satirical style. He points to some of the grave futuristic problems but in a tone that is mostly humorous rather scary. As Maroof writes "He has the subtle humor of a social critic". One may read these lines:-

ندَکھ ڈٕلِ آسہِ ترٛبن ساسَن تہٕ شیٚچھن
ترٛبن ساسَن گَرن وٕہ ژٕڈٕ رٕنجَس ناس
ترقی ہُنٛد یہِ عالم واتہٕ جَلدٕے
عوام اُلناس ییٚلہِ ساسَن گَرن ڈاس

No matter how satirical these lines appear in their depth they harbor a treasure of meanings, predictions and indications. This is what we said earlier that his is a layered poetry. Here it must be noted that Nazki is not opposed to progress, as one may get a false notion. He, like Iqbal is upset with the means by which progress is brought and the price that we are paying for it. What progress is it that we are purchasing clothes at the cost of our ethics and morality? What progress is it that we are bringing literacy at the cost of education and enlightenment?

ترقی گٔر، ترقی روٗز جاری
عوامَس کیٛاہ گومُت تِمہ کیٛازِ نالان
وَنَن دٔدِ وَن گٔرِتھ موکلے یہِ راتھے
چھِ ازکل أسر ودں بونٛبن موٗل گالان

Dynamism, as is understood in the common parlance as being something associated with mechanical and muscular activities is not a dominant even visible denomination in his poetry. He engages himself more with ideological dynamics and emphasizes on evolution of ideas. He is interested in self-construction and introspection of one's own territory of ideas and emotions. As such he doesn't want to deconstruct any of the existing structures of society, though he may at times dream to change its existing state. To put it subtly he wants to repair the society instead of creating a new one by bulldozing the existing one. Thus it is unjustifiable to call him a revolutionary poet, for he never dreamt a one (If by revolution is meant something replacement of existing order). He is worried about vanishing of vernacular ethos and deflation of rich cultural traditions, something that doesn't characterize a revolutionary. He cries:-

کٲشِراہ اَس، اَتھ اَچھِ دارِ کٕتھاہ گو

رواداری تہٕ تتھ پٮ۪ٹھ پڑارِ کٕتھاہ گو

اَما تتھ ژارِچے بڑبوارِ کٕتھاہ گو

وَداں کونٛگ وارِ کتھ پٮ۪ٹھ وارِ کٕتھاہ گو

These lines amply illustrate the stance of Nazki as far as changing social dynamics is concerned. In same context it may be noted that resistance as is used and understood in post-colonial literary parlance is not a theme in his poetry. One may find a line here or a couplet there but that surely doesn't entitle him as poet of resistance. By poetry of resistance should be understood something emerging as a reaction to imposition of political hegemony. He is more interested to raise his voice against those internal forces that tend to collide with the intrinsic nature of man. He is searching something, something of which Rumi said:-

دی شیخ با چراغ ہمی گشت گردِ شہر

کز دام و دد ملولم و انسانم آرزوست

To which Nazki replies:-

گوماں چھکھ جلوٕ ژھانڈان کوہِ طورس

بزماں چھُے زوٗح کانٛہا مُحرماہ نُو ژھ

قدم ٹل تیز گوہ ژھانڈن ژٕ آدم

پھٕلس چھُے تمناہ آدماہ گوژھ

In this regard it is also noteworthy that Nazki is a sophist if not a Sufi, an ideologue if not revolutionary and a realist if not imaginary in his essence.

His greatest achievement is that drawing inferences from everyday life he builds up a simple, pragmatic, workable and tenable philosophy of life, rather living. His philosophy of living is rooted in compassion, traditionalism, humanism and realism. As his writings reveal, his greatest teacher has been his life itself. He has been an insightful and keen spectator of life of which he later turns to be a great interpreter and commentator. God seems to have given him the vision to see beyond structures into the reality of superstructure.

As Iqbal said:-

بوعلی اندر غبارے ناقہ گم   دست رومی پردۂ محمل گرفت

Nazki is at times too informal while addressing God. This is quite a unique style of poetry with which many of poets haven't been comfortable with. This style is typical of Ghalib and Iqbal in Urdu, and Hafiz in Persian. This leads us to believe that Nazki must have had Sufi influences on his subconscious, because it is only via this influence that man becomes too informal with God. As poet describes it beautifully.

خودداری اتنی فطرت رندانہ چاہیئے

ساقی یہ خود کہے تجھے پینا نہ چاہیئے

Shikwa of Iqbal marks a paradigm in Urdu poetry viz a viz, the style that is dominant therein. Nazki follows same style in many of his verses being too informal with God. This informality sometimes turns satiric, but as always within this satire is embedded deep sense of meaning. As Nazki says:-

یہ چھس زاناں ژٕ چھکھ مُشتاق میوٕنے

نہٕ چھے نیٚنٛدٕر نہٕ چھے نیٚہ میانہٕ دادے

یہ زَن ونہٕ ہا ژٕے گوی ہمراز شیطان

میٚہ کیٛاہ کوٚرمَے میٚہ کتھ کوٚرتھن اگادے

It may again been emphasized hereupon that Nazki has a dexterous command over oriental languages including Persian and Arabic through and through. This enabled him to not only write in diverse languages thereby attaining the status of trans-language poet, but he at times uses cross language structures and that add beauty and meaning to his verses. The Arabic maxims that we find sprinkled in his Kashmiri Quatrains beautify his verses like anything besides adding many dimensions to it. The incorporation of his Persian ode in one of the journals from USSR, very well describes his status in languages beyond his native one. His "Tazmeen" on Quatrain "Yasaahibuljamaal" in four languages is in itself a magical one, which in addition to its rhythm and subtleties is a treasure of wisdom and inspiration. In this regard an essay by Ayaz Rasool Nazki titled "Qandi Parsi" is a beautiful exposition. The eulogy he wrote in Persian on demise of Allama Iqbal is again a treat to read.

It is to be out ruled that Nazki is not the poet of Islam, better to call him an Islamic poet. He is rather to be understood and evaluated as poet of traditions, maybe Islamic tradiitons. Though the love of Prophet (saw) and the belief that he shows hitherto on Islamic teachings is unquestionable , but all this is insufficient to label rather mis-tag him as poet of Islam. He sees religion as a force of cohesion, an impulse of love, an aroma of humanism, a drive towards compassion and an endeavor towards mutual coexistence. The stubborn meaning that we ascribe to religious maxims, the awful relation of worshipper and worshipped and the element of discontent that exists towards other communities in our classical understanding of religion falls apart in his verses. He is a Universalist and a compassionate who sees men not as entities to be classified on religion but to be judged by the content of character. This must be clear by his own essay on "Mysticism in Kashmir".

Grief, pessimism and repulsion to world as characteristics of poetry are dominant in Nazki as well. Irrespective of language and sapcio-temporal allocations these elements have dominated the poetry throughout ages. Even in times, when nations were in bloom we have a good count of pessimist poets. Maybe this indifference towards life is because of their better understanding of it or because of their failure to understand life itself. On personal note while discussing this problem with my sibling, I was asked "What comes first pain or poetry"? I must admit that I couldn't answer. Well, grief is dearer to Nakzi as well, rather his most prized possession. In grief lies solace for him and in suffering he enjoys his existence. This grief, at places is purely subjective on account of familial or economic considerations and at times it assumes the shape of universal grief, something characteristic of Faani, Ghalib and Mir. As Hamidi Kashmiri says "Grief is dearer to him for it has been his lifelong companion". As Nazki writes:-

دل عموماً اداس رہتا ہے
وقفِ حرمان و یاس رہتا ہے
چھوڑ جاتے ہیں ساتھ سب ساتھی
ایک غم ہے جو پاس رہتا ہے

Nazki, besides many other dimensions is what Dr. Nikhat Nazar says "poet of nature" or a naturalist. In this regard the scenic beauty of his valley seems to have influenced him greatly. The words he chooses to portray what he sees are so appropriate and impactful that despite abstract, the have the magic to create physical image in readers mind. It needs to be mentioned with emphasis that his epiphany is mostly symbolic while he tries to be a naturalist. In doing this he behaves as a dualist in the sense that besides fulfilling norms of poetry, he conveys a message, between the words, the basic purpose of his poetry. One may find a mention of dal and Wullar, Chinar and Snobar, Nishat and Manasbal in his verses here and there, but these places, at times connote something more than a geographical location, depending upon the context. Given such a premise, Nazki shall be deemed as a symbolic naturalist. Note the following:-

آب شبابی چاندنی رات اور یہ مانسبل کی جھیل
حسن کی چپ چاپ دنیا خلد کا گلشن جمیل
دور تا حدِ نظر سرسبز کھیتوں کی مخمل ر
آرزو کا سلسلہ لا انتہا فرصت قلیل

The last line shall bear witness to my propositions made above with reference to his naturalism.

On personal note I have always felt that Nazki is more comfortable with Persian and Kashmiri. To remove ambiguity I will first deliberate upon the word comfort here. When as a reader I read his Urdu poetry, Nazki seems, as opposed to his genre an aesthetic. His attention towards language and algebra of poetry rips the impact and appeal from his verses. Indeed some of his verses are an ensemble of rhyme here as well but they are less in number. As contrasted to this in Kasmiri he takes the seamless flight of a bird, his words seem to create magic, and he seems to

be addressing us somewhere from out of worlds and the impact increases manifold. Even he himself acknowledges his indifference towards Urdu prior to reading "Aabihayat". It seems the book deconstructed the indifference but he still remained rooted in Urdu and Persian. In this regard it is a matter of misfortune that our younger generation has turned deaf ears to languages like Persian and Kashmiri, whereby we are closing the doors of possibilities opened by Nazki by virtue of these two extraordinary lexicons.

Before concluding these pages I would like to place it before the readers that Nazki is the poet of hope and possibilities. His message has a wider and brighter scope in contemporary and upcoming episteme. He has succeeded in carving out a permanent place for himself and is surely a beacon and milestone in our cultural history. To say least it only remains up to us to illuminate our ways by his extraordinary brilliance, poetic insight, mystic vision and holistic understanding of life.

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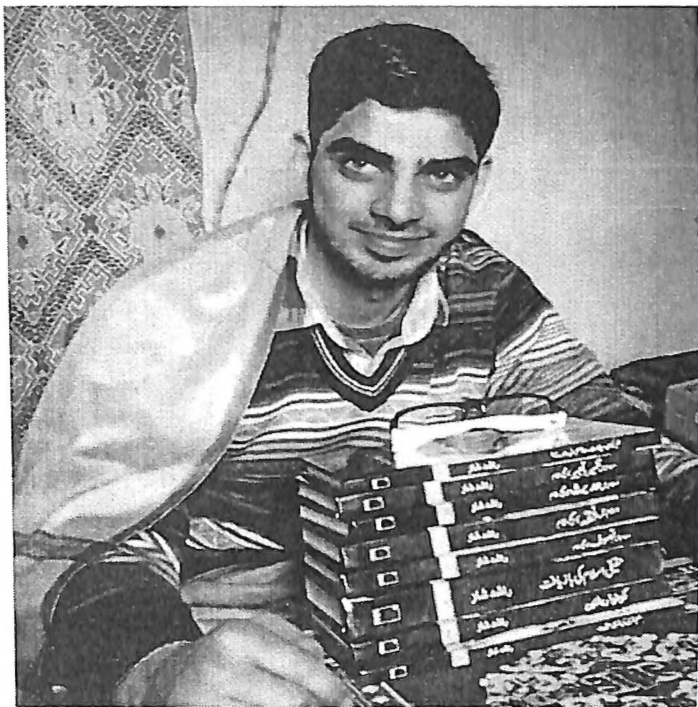
About the Author:-

Born in Chattabal, in era of frozen turbulence, the author is currently perusing B.Tech in electrical engineering from NIT, Hazratbal. Endowed with diverse tastes ranging from poetry to cosmology and writing on spectrum of issues spanning from social dynamics to Quantum revolution, he has contributed dozens of papers to local, national and international papers, besides contributing numerous scripts for radio. He has been guest to many radio and television shows in addition to delivering lectures in universities across the state particularly on Iqbaliyat and philosophy of science and Sufi thought.